

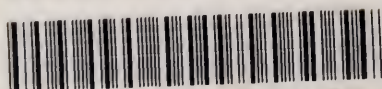
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SAUNDERS # FIFTEEN YEARS OLD



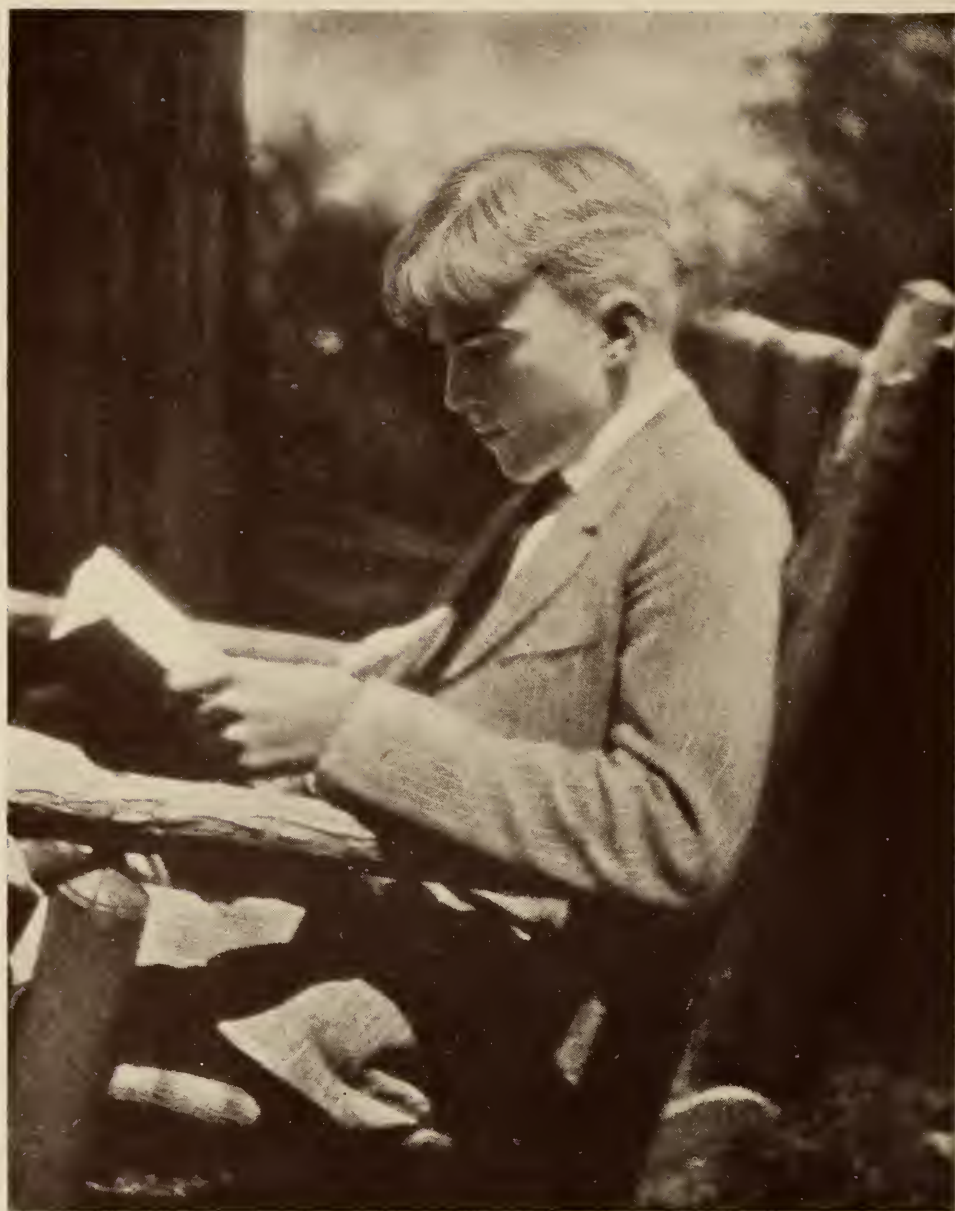
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25th & 26th
in the line
of
Prayer & Love



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FIFTEEN YEARS OLD



FIFTEEN
YEARS OLD

BEING LETTERS, NOTES
& MANUSCRIPTS LEFT
BEHIND BY

William Duncan Saunders
AND PICKED UP BY HIS
FRIENDS

G. C. R. AND A. W.

New York

PRIVATELY PRINTED

MCMXXIII

518,50
~~518,50~~

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G. C. R. *and* A. W.

FOREWORD

As two of Duncan Saunders' friends, we have, in the pages that follow, printed for his other friends such of his letters and verses and odds and ends of manuscript as we could find. There has been no exercise of selection in any pretentious notion of showing him off to better advantage. Indeed, in the process of editing them, we have cut only three or four lines and those only to soften certain idle and facetious observations about his grown-up neighbors that he would never have spoken aloud.

The publication has been made with no grandiose idea that the world might thereby see how fine a man was in the making when, in the middle of his freshman year at Hamilton, his life was cut short. For we doubt if strangers, in turning these pages, would find that out. We doubt if this haphazard and imperfect record even faintly suggests how rich he was in humor and appreciation, how gallant was his spirit, how gentle his heart, how sunlit he was. We, who watched him through his last year, knew that he possessed, by a kind of divination, the wisdom for which most of us have to trudge to the end of the world and look over the wall. We had never seen anyone who stood so eager at the threshold of life. We had never found anyone who seemed so clearly destined to enrich and enhance it. But it is to be doubted if this chance chronicle of his last year tells half that story.

So it has been printed only for those who already knew him. It has been put forth only in the feeling that others of his friends might like to share a privilege we had enjoyed—this glimpse of his busy, exploring young mind.

G. C. R. and A. W.

THE following letters were sent during his last year to his mother; to Cynthia Anne Miller, of Utica; to William M. Griffith ("Zip"), a Hamilton graduate of the Class of 1921; to his school friend, Jack Chase; to William Baer of his own fraternity in college; to his aunts, Mrs. Daniels and Miss Brownell; and to Wallace Johnson, a Hamilton alumnus living in Utica.

THE FIRST ACCEPTANCE

JANUARY, 1921

My dear CYNTHIA:

I have had, I think, the greatest thrill in my life. This morning I opened the mail-bag and perceived a letter addressed to me. I opened it and read that a magazine called "Popular Astronomy" had actually accepted a poem I sent them. Oh, Cynthia, if you could imagine the joy I felt—I think I have hardly ever been happier than I was at that moment. But it was really the most beautiful example of the cruel irony of fate. All summer, since June I had toiled writing stories and poems and daily I sent them out to magazines—but every one of them came back—it did not discourage me at first until it was time for school to begin. A whole summer of hard work and only broken hopes and cruel disappointments, only the agony of having the plots you had worked over and thought over and sweated over, spurned, every one. Then one evening in the Christmas holidays I sat down and having nothing to do wrote a poem about the stars; I was really hardly interested in it. I sent it off, hardly even caring whether it was taken or not, and then—this is what happens.

The Utica Observer put in a little thing of mine in the Children's Contest the other day. I don't know whether it would even interest you, but still it's in this letter somewhere.

Two weeks from last Friday we are to give Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar." The whole school is in it and I'm working like a nailer to try and make my part what it ought to be. I love acting and always wish I had more

chances to do it, and then when I do get the chances, I do it so badly. Then the night after that we were going to give three plays, but the professors around the place all said they thought the play I was to be in was no good, so I don't get in it at all. It will be a terrible night for me when every one but me is acting, but I am going to try to make good stage settings for them.

Let me tell you about our little New Year's party—oh, yes you know about that—well then, I see from my window now the tall, thin poplars over the skating rink at the college. A house is covering the glare of the lights so that the trees are a dull white, beautiful, like a fantastic painting of Fairyland, everything is so dark except them.

Cynthia, if this letter doesn't get to you, because I've forgotten the name of the landing on the lake in the address, if—this letter doesn't get to you—just send it back and I'll re-address it.

Please let me hear from you soon. I want so much to know how you are.

Affectionately,

DUNCAN

NIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

JANUARY, 1921

My dear CYNTHIA:

I hope my first letter got to you; if it did not, this one won't either.

I thought it might interest you to know what we did last night. It was cold and rainy, but the ground was covered with snow. Four of us went over to the College Library and went up to the very top picture gallery and then turned into a little store closet and felt around until we came to a ladder. Peter Chase climbed up

and opened a trap door on to a flat gravel roof. In turn we all climbed up and I set up my camera. Night photography! I had never tried it before, but had always wanted to. We screwed the camera to a wooden tripod and faced it downward to the ground. Then one went to set off the fireworks. He held a flashlight below so that I could focus the camera. Then we called "Ready." A tiny match flame burnt for a few seconds and then a blue one came by lighting a magnesium wire. The roof, the windows, the trees, the snow, the College buildings all became blue—a most brilliant blue! For seven seconds the sight lasted—one of the most wonderful things I have ever seen. Then it died down, but it was recorded on a photographic plate. When they come out I promise to send you a copy of each (we took several). If these don't come out well, we are determined to try again. We can tell from this experiment whether there was too much light or too little. To-night after the Movies at the College we shall take one in the Cemetery. That will be great. If the first tries turn out well, you ought to get them by next week sometime, otherwise later.

Please let me know how you are and if my notes have got to you; I think of you all the time.

DUNCAN

My address is

Duncan Saunders,

Clinton, N. Y.

In case you didn't know my Clinton Street number you don't need one.

THE INCORRIGIBLE ACTOR

JANUARY, 1921

My dear CYNTHIA ANNE:

I am sorry not to have written you before this, but we have been working so hard over plays that I simply couldn't put in the time. We gave the 2 one-act plays "The Swan Song" by Anton Tchekoff and "The Workhouse Ward" by Lady Gregory on Friday and then "Julius Caesar" on Saturday. What a heap of work I did have to do, but both were a tremendous success. We got one hundred dollars for the Hoover Fund, altogether.

After this you might think we would take a rest from theatricals for a while, but no—Walter Hampden comes Monday and Tuesday evenings and Tuesday afternoon—and I am going to see all three of his plays. After this orgy I hope to sleep, that is until 6:00 o'clock every morning when I rise to do Algebra and learn French poetry. Did you bluff it off all right? Let's hope so because I got 56 on my History that day.

Archie Van Beuren, who is staying with us this winter, brought up his parents to the plays. They are really exceedingly amusing, very rich and quite important socially. They dress with the most perfect fastidiousness. She was telling us about some exam papers that a friend of hers had had to correct and one of the answers was: "A blizzard is the insides of a hen." Strange to say, we laughed.

Cynthia, I wish I had time to write some more, but I just *have* to get at my Monday morning studies.

Please write me again soon.

Thank you so much for your lovely letter.

DUNCAN

ON FRIENDSHIP

FEBRUARY 1, 1921

My dear CYNTHIA ANNE:

Your letter came on Saturday afternoon, when I felt terribly depressed, everything seemed going so badly—well, you know how things get sometimes into such an unendurable state—luck just seemed against me altogether. I cannot tell you how much that note meant to me just then. I read it through so happily and at the end, that one word just before your signature made me almost weep for joy. It made me feel that perhaps you felt just a little bit toward me as I do toward you. I wish you could understand that nothing more beautiful could have happened, that drear afternoon, than receiving your letter. I should like to tell you exactly how I felt, but plain English words—the same words with which we must buy merchandise or anything else—cannot describe it adequately. It is a pity one must express emotion with the same words as any commonplace thing on this earth. There ought to be a language in itself for emotions. For this reason I shall not attempt to say what I should like to say, but leave it to you. You know that if I tried to put it on paper it would sound awkward and ridiculous; why not leave it as it stands?

To-night Lincoln Houghton, who is staying here this winter with us, is going with my sister Silvia and a friend of hers from Bryn Mawr over to the prom dance at the College. They are all supping here and will go over in a few minutes. In Lincoln I have found a wonderful friend this year. Our friendship has been of a curious nature—it is a great deal scrap. We disagree a good deal but when we do have long chats I feel that he confides in me and I in him. After all it's the friendships with

quarrels occasionally that count. It makes people understand each other. (Pardon the new color of ink, I just filled my pen.) Lincoln has had tremendous experience in the war as an ambulance man, aside from being connected with interesting friends. Sometimes we chat for two hours straight, lying on his bed. I have grown very fond of him.

Cynthia, I must close now, and if you think I am a "dude" after this letter lay it to the fact that Emerson said, "A true friend is one to whom we can think aloud," and I treat you as such.

Good-night, and thanks so much for your sweet letter.

Your devoted,

DUNCAN

S P O R T A N D S O N G

M A R C H , 1 9 2 1

My dear CYNTHIA ANNE:

I have been sick with a light case of grippe. Please forgive me for not writing sooner. I have written several rotten poems and read several good books. I enclose a short poem which I did then.

I am going to Florida for Easter, with the family of one of the boys visiting us. They have a sort of yacht-house-boat down there and cruise all over the place.

The other day we had a hare and hound race which was very thrilling. I had to be a hound and naturally "they" (the hares) won. It meant half drowning myself in mud and water, leaping fences and tearing clothes, and so on.—And then the very next day little Ralph Rogers has the audacity to telephone up and ask,

"Do you want to run another hare and hound?"

It was hard enough for me, after the first, to walk down stairs.

I am sure you had a good time in New York from what you said about it. I shall be in that direction soon.

Affectionately,

DUNCAN

[Enclosure in the above letter]

A S O N G

In a fairy place I used to be,
A mystic palace, where red jewels hung
Like icicles, in an emerald sea,
Where music has chimed and deep bells rung.

Resounding in majestic echoes through the caves
And grottoes of ice, there mermaids sang of love,
Surrounded by soft topaz in long staves,
And sea translucent green above.

F L O R I D A

A P R I L , 1 9 2 1

Dear CYNTHIA:

Pardon me for not writing on the trip, but we were so busy all the time.

The whole thing was like a strange dream—so fantastic, so bizarre. Every bird song was something strange and queer—every plant had some thorn or prickly. The jungles were thick—almost impassable. The yachts were like white birds on the ocean—long beautiful forms, lying at ease in the harbor. The alligators, the pelicans,

the long and beautiful sea gulls—everything had a sort of romantic and strange enchantment to it.

We just got back (pardon [a blot], it's the pen's fault) a couple of days ago, and we're all at work again. In a couple of weeks we shall enter that marvelous season when the buds are half way open and there is such a light green over everything and one can see through the half opened leaves the branches of the trees.

Good-bye, dear, and please understand that my slowness in writing to you is not a lack of caring.

Affectionately,

DUNCAN

O N S U N D R Y C I R C U S E S

J U L Y , 1 9 2 1

Well old BILL:

I suppose your expecting the check from papa. I certainly have had a great week with Zip. We gave two plays in which he did beautifully. I should have written you sooner, were it not for the fact that it was not until this evening that I knew what to say. But now I do! Hereafter I shall be wearing a little green and white shield on my lapel. My gosh, Bill, you don't know how happy I am!

This afternoon our family marched *in bulk* to the Circus in Utica. It certainly is the place to get the most fascinating exhibition of human beings in the world. Everything was so striking—the coloured hats, dresses, balloons—all mixed and spotted over the whole thing. There was one tight-rope dancer, or rather she was really a trapeze (or trapeze?) expert. The beauty of her gymnastics was beyond words. In the first place she was small—very pretty and so graceful! I have never seen such grace in any

human being as in the swing—the beautiful swirl through the air of that body.

Zip has probably told you all about Alec Woollcott here, but in case he hasn't, I will go over a brief synopsis of his character—and appearance.

He is a ——— of course you heard him lecture. Well, at any rate he has brought a croquet set into the neighborhood and has got the whole faculty out there wasting their time miserably sending balls through wickets. Gosh, what fun it is to watch Dad and Woollcott, Jack Calder (by the way, he certainly is a brick—gosh! what a peach of a man!) and Bill Marlow, all batting around the place.

I have had a few fascinating talks to Alex, and learned all sorts of things about the personalities of the noted actors, authors, and critics of N. Y. Really, he is interesting as the devil on that sort of thing.

Well, it's one A.M. and I am dropping off to sleep. So are you I guess.

Pardon the writing and the paper—but they were both the best I had.

Do write if you get a chance, if only to say "Congratulations."

Your will-be slimer,

BILL

THE GEORGE JUNIOR REPUBLIC

JULY, 1921

Dearest MOTH:

We had a perfectly grand time. The Republic is a work of extraordinary genius. Daddy George is one of the most astonishing men I have ever met—a live wire personal magnet. I will tell you everything to-morrow.

Good-night, dearest,

BILL

P.S. 2 bots. ginger ale—on ice in laundry.

JULY, 1921

My dear BILL:

Your letter couldn't have been nicer. It was great of you to write. I can't seem to believe that at last all my wildest dreams have come true. It does seem such a short time ago that we took that walk together—and at that time I shouldn't have dreamed that there might be many more far better in the future. And the same the second time when we sat watching the squirrels on the lawn. That day I met some fellows I didn't know. I didn't know the Hall at all either—and now I am to belong to it—to be a part of the greatest bunch going! It's uncanny to think that when I came over that day to ask you the first time—embarrassed so I felt as though I were swallowing what Zip calls a flannel croquette—it does seem strange that you might have said right then: "Here is one of my freshmen" and instead you said: "What damn fool is this heaving in sight?"

These are the happiest moments of my life—that is when I look forward into next year with the crowd I love. The Sigs put up a pretty big resistance that Commencement Sunday trying to exert every kind of pressure (including a pledge button), but even if it was hard, it's over now, and I've got what I wanted more than anything else in my life.

Your letter had certain questions. Bill Marlow says he is delighted that you would appreciate an answer. (Whatcha goin' ter do wid a man like dat?)

Prof. Fancher's house is progressing. They have been emptying some quicksand from his cellar these last few days.

Yes, we still swim—almost every night. Oh, but the greatest one was the first night when I had my button. Clem and Norm and Bill and I all went down. Then the

other night the two Calders, my sister Olivia, Dick Wood, and I went down. Incidentally Jack went down about 4 feet. One more—the golf course is pretty bad; but if you're the same, it's worth playing on. Jack, being a good golfer, almost withered the other day out there.

I had a nice trip the other day down to the George Junior Republic with Jack and Alec Woollcott.

I'd go on telling you loads more, Bill, except I have a geometry exam in 10 minutes. I just started the other day—it's pretty good fun.

I'll write soon again and you know I should like to hear from you.

Yours,

BILL

T O B A E R A G A I N

A U G U S T , 1 9 2 1

My dear BILL:

Of course being sick is no excuse, but if Zip was there, I don't see how you ever got about writing. If you can give me his address I should be much obliged.

I have seen a lot of Bob Rudd. He certainly is a delightful man. It is great he'll be here next winter.

Woollcott was up here in his room the other day when Mr. Wetmore (evidently mad) came in and then coughed up: "There's a window broken around here somewhere."

Woollcott: "Did you see the hole or the broken glass?"

Wetmore: "What!"

Woollcott: "Did you know there was a broken window by the place where it was or the glass on the ground?"

Wetmore: (with wild stare) "What d'ye mean by asking me a fool question like that? Don't ye think I know my business? What d'ye mean by it?"

Woollcott: "Aw, clear out of here."

Wetmore: "Clear out! You damn hunk." (Quick exit).

But damn hunk is the perfect description.

By the way, I have seen a lot of Art Doyle recently. We have been comparing works of literary genius. (He wins). Do get his "Might-have-been-Boy" placed if you can. It's beginning (i. e. up to Mr. Lake's entrance) is great, isn't it? But unfortunately Mr. Lake is N. G.—he isn't human.

Do me one favor—send me anything you've been writing recently, will you? I mean that, I should like to see something.

There was rather a funny episode last night. Woollcott came up to his room where my coat was, and returned wearing an A. D. pledge button. No one noticed at first, but suddenly Mrs. Calder saw and laughed, and then Jack and I pitched in. But, my gosh, the little fat hunk has some muscle, believe me. But it was rather funny. Particularly the way Jack massacred Woollcott.

Well, write soon again please. Wait, College opens—I can't find a catalogue. I'll drop you a card tomorrow.

Yours,

BILL

(Not Marlow, you know. Don't confuse the two. One is spelled differently).

THE YOUNG GOLFER

AUGUST, 1921

Dear BILL:

September 19-21, Entrance Exams.

September 20-21, Registration of all classes.

September 21, 5 P.M., You and I meet Dad in the chapel

September 22, Opening of the Academic year.

(That's one way of putting it).

If you can work out when to come, you beat me. My

only salvation is the fact that I can get up early every morning and sit on the Chapel steps to see what's going on all day. Geometry is fun, but I'm way behind where I ought to be. I see where I don't visit Big Moose in early September—nor in late September.

Well—that's the information you wanted, so as the preacher in Chapel says: "I will keep you only a minute longer," and then runs on till quarter of one. I have learned heaps of golf this summer, having seen Duncan and Mitchell, the English champs, play. And then Elihu Root, Jr., was up here yesterday and he gave me some golden pointers.

I played with Prof. Patton the other day and he suddenly burst out with a Byronic gesture and: "Golf is an *ancient* game—a *royal* game!" And what do you think I said by mistake? I said: "Well, that *is* true, even if it sounds silly to say it." He looked like an 1841 penny. Woolcott left last night and I really was sorry to see him go, even if we did kid each other about being glad. And he gave me a perfectly serious invitation to come to N. Y. at Xmas and stay at the Alpha Delt Club and he would take me to first nights, etc. And I know he meant it. We got on beautifully together and he was very friendly and very much of a tease. It has been very exciting here about an incident the other night. Art Doyle and Fancher were walking over to Carnegie at night when they saw a couple enter it. They followed them and pushed open the door of the room the couple had fled to, but it was held and locked on the other side. Then they went to get Brick and came in the window, but the room was abandoned. Woolcott thinks that Mrs. King knows and won't tell who it was.

Well, it is breakfast time and geometry at 9.

Write again soon,

BILL

Are you going to Colorado?

AUGUST, 1921

My dear WILLIAM:

I am very much disappointed that you will not let me see any of your things. Art tells me that there is quite a play you have written called "Porches." It is an excellent title, but I hope that you do not write plays like "Miss Lulu Bett," "Jane Clegg," "Main Street" and the like. Art has sent the "Might-Have-Been Boy" to the Provincetown Players. I wonder how that will come out. I can only hope, for that is too ambitious a thing for a fellow just out of college to expect to win out on. By the way, if you can, look through the "Popular Astronomy" for February, 1921. (Near the End.)

I am having a great time reading Hugh Walpole's "Fortitude" which is a really marvellously human story. It's essential is human. It's theme is "It isn't life that matters, but the courage you bring to it." I am very much afraid that Walpole, although his atmospheres are beautifully worked up will never be an immortal, because he has not the philosophy behind it all.

I received a letter from Woolcott today enclosing a poem by F. P. A. which he said was waiting on his desk when he came back. This was it:

TO A. W.

Welcome home, welcome home!
That's the theme of this here pome.
For not excepting even my wife
I never missed anyone so much in my life.

F. P. A.

I think that man's column is the best going in the witty line in newspapers.

By the way, Woolcott is coming up in October to visit

the Edward Roots. I look forward to seeing him again then.

It was rather amusing, I heard from Clem Martin the other day, and he said, "As long as you are alone in the house, I suggest that you practice some cooking for next winter." My God, is there no one in the whole crowd who can cook? I can fry a wicked egg, and that's just about where I stop. Bill Marlow is leaving here today or tomorrow, alas, so that I shall not see him again until college opens. Norm is staying on considerably longer I guess, since he lives right here.

Alec has a ready wit. Bob Rudd and I were talking about something in the architectural line, and Mr. Rudd said: "That thing belonged to some old Norman."

"Some old Norman Baron, I feel sure", said the New York Times. Pretty good when it had to be thought up in a twinkling.

I heard from Harriet Monroe, editor of "Poetry, a Magazine of Verse" the other day. It was rather interesting—that paper published in their July issue a review of Conrad Aiken's "Punch." The review took a favourable attitude toward the book, but said also: "The effect of the whole poem was seriously marred by the Epilogue, which was out of tune with the rest of the spirit of the poem." I thought that was pretty poor, so I wrote to Poetry and said: "I think that the Reviewer of Mr. Aiken's "Punch" said the truth in every point but one and that was that the Epilogue was a mistake. I feel that the epilogue was in Mr. Aiken's true element and that the idea of it was exactly what the whole book had worked up to. I also think that Mr. Aiken is rarely given half the credit due him by reviewers, because he is the one living American poet who has a real claim to Immortality."

So this was Harriet's reply:

"I wish to thank you for your note of recent date, which

I have forwarded to the reviewer. Although we do not rank Mr. Aiken as highly as you do, it was very interesting indeed to hear the opinion of so ardent an admirer."

So I went to bed.

Well, I guess you've had about enough of this drivel, so I will turn it off immediately. Did you get Art's play seen? By the way Woolcott never said anything about the Commencement performance, but I wouldn't get discouraged at that because, as you must know, he can't afford to throw opinions around. The only thing was that when I asked him why he made the prize for a play about Hamilton, he said, "I just wondered what Zip could do with something he knew something about." (Not nastily or anything).

By the way, he and I have agreed that we shall write the play together and get it produced under my name and he must get half the proceeds. Likewise the last three years of my college course. Rather good plan, eh?

Your own,

BILL (not "Duncan" except the address)

THE SUB FRESHMAN

SEPTEMBER, 1921

Well ZIP:

I only just got your address this morning from Bill Baer when I met him in Utica as he was passing through for a few days in the Great City before College opens. I wish you had stayed a few days more that last hasty peep at the Hill when we had a conversation about Alec beneath his window. We were only just beginning to get acquainted, and we should have had more talks like the other ones this summer, which meant so much to me. At any rate, I hope for more in the future.

Everyone is just beginning to arrive for early fall football practice, and it does feel good to see them all

here again. By the way, I am stung on the living-at-the-college deal. There is so little space for the incoming class of 140 that some are going to have to be sent away unless they can find themselves homes in Clinton or Utica. How fine it would be if the College could at last begin to pick the more select from the freshmen! A little culling would be excellent.

I am very anxious to hear what you are doing out there in Hollywood. Have you done any writing? By the way, Art Doyle, having been here all the summer, showed me the "Might-have-been Boy," and I think its beginning is perfectly superb. But I am afraid the plot is perhaps not quite strong enough to stand much strain. The Provincetowns have been reading it for him, having in view the production of it, but I don't know how that venture has turned out. I suppose you know that it is being produced by amateur companies in Porkipsy (damn the spelling) and Oneonta, and Bill has tried to get it placed in Peoria. But I guess you have had the latest from Bill himself.

I hear from him that you are performing out there already. I am too anxious for words to know how you are disposing of the time you have. Why don't you try stock, wouldn't that be good experience?

Well, I wish there were more thrills—oh yes, I am all through Geometry except for the exam and the licking that Brownie will administer after I have failed it.

He has acquired the most aggravating habit: before a large and distinguished company of all the most noted professors here, he says in a loud voice, "Well, Bill, paddle day comes next June, but hossin' begins next month!" Great applause.

Isn't a sense of humor precious? Brownie and Bob Rudd have the rest of the faculty all canned, save

perhaps, Morrill, Fancher, Shepard, Chase, Carruth, Saunders (S.J.) Wisewell, Patton, Super, etc.

By the way, I must gossip.

Shepard came into Clinton the other day in a golf suit and a superb tan. He has been camping in Canada somewhere. All vacationists have wended their ways into Canada this summer, even Dad who is the most virtuous of men—I wonder if I shall be greatly disillusioned some day!

Enough gas.

Affectionately,

BILL

P.S. From your address, I see to my great perplexity that you have not yet emerged from the Victorian Period. Please don't make Victorian sentimentalism your stronghold!

THE FIRST WEEK OF COLLEGE

SEPTEMBER 16 — PAST 12:00

Dear old ZIP:

It is very late—getting on towards the hours when we begin to feel like chatting over things. I wish you were here beside me now, and I could pour my woes over you, and receive sympathy such as you have always given—such as comes only from a real human understanding. I know that sounds hypocritical—but I do miss you and I cannot see why I let you live in Clinton four years and never appreciated you until this last summer.

At any rate, I should not have appreciated a friend then—so I must make the best of it now.

I do not know just when I shall be able to make Billy Baer realize I am here. It has been a great disappointment to me so far in finding that he does not care a rap

for my company. But there is no use complaining, I have always tried—though not always succeeded—to make disappointments and disillusionments not knocks of fate which leave one stunned, but a whet to sharpen one's purpose and a push to a fresh start.

That philosophy seems to me in gayer moments a very great discovery, but in those empty darknesses into which we fall, it seems useless, though then I need it most.

I should be really unhappy were it not that Ted Riggs is back and he began with the same sophomoric superiority—no, that's not it—at any rate, why should I expect anything more? But on Saturday night I took a walk with him in the Roots' woods in utter blackness, while the twinkling marvels burned so far over the matted trees. Then I had a real joy. We talked of everything suggested by such a night—and indeed things far too profound and secret for either to touch.

I know last winter I fell into pits of unhappiness frequently—and there was cause, too—but now they seem such trifles. And looking back on last week—will it not be the same? I expected too much—I must prove myself something more than I am, first.

And I was glad to get your letter. There was a message from one far off, to whom, I am so ashamed to say, I did not even leave a message of "Bon Voyage" before he left. And yet, you were kind enough to overlook that.

I am mighty sorry about your mother's hurt, please remember me to her; I do hope she will be better soon.

But more, I am sorry that your trip has not been a joy from beginning to end, as you must have expected. But it won't be long before you are settled and can get back to work of some sort. And then—good luck.

Remember that here I am, very insignificant, but one more soul hoping and having confidence in you.

This is a poor effort, Zip, I have no business trying to say things like that, but you know perfectly how I feel and it is futile to try to write emotions.

This is a marvellous crowd. I am rooming with Stone and Bill Marlow; the former keeps me working, but that will be over soon, as soon as action begins. It is the ever existant inertia of the early fall which has made me a little discouraged perhaps, but within a week I shall begin to work on my big hope. Tubby Hall has written a play which Ted, Tub, Bill, Don Allen (a freshman) and I shall give privately and then suggest it to Fancher for Charlatans. One's first chance is the one that counts—I am praying and working—and thinking things over carefully. It *is* not an important part—but I must not fail. Well, it is so very late, I must close. I shall try and let my disappointment serve as an extra help in this thing. And—you will understand this, old fellow, perhaps this may be a chance to eradicate it.

Ever affectionately,

Your own, BILL

THE REALMS OF GOLD

OCTOBER, 1921

Dearest MOTH:

This letter will get to you much later than I, but still I must sit down and write you. Yesterday I finished up "Irradiations"; there are about four good poems in it, but they are really exquisite. I have not been able to get at "Pagodas" yet. You remember I spoke of a book by Eunice Tietjens. The first poem is on this theme:

"I have too many selves to know the one,
I have laid my head upon the altar
To light too many fires."

It is really a tremendous thing.

I have also been doing some F. Thompson re-reading. He is a great poet, I think, although he is really too thick. The more I think of it, the more he seems to me to be the Beardsley (I fear that is spelled wrong) of poetry.

But when it comes down to real, thrilling pleasure, one should not read American Moderns, except that I feel such an interest in what, within twenty-five years, is going to be an upheaval in this country. They are still groping, but everything tends toward a far greater interest, not only on the part of the player, but the listener.

As a matter of fact, Poetry is, as yet, the least noticed of the arts in America.

It seems to me that the people of importance, when one looks back on the early writers of the "New Era," will be: first, of course, Whitman, then, I think, Lindsay, our own beloved Aiken, and I am inclined to believe, in spite of all, Amy Lowell, not, perhaps, on account of her work as her quantity and her devotion to the cause. Then there are others who have written occasional fine things, but who write such little meager volumes with three or four beautiful pieces. These would be Fletcher, Robinson, Tietjens, Frost, and Bynner. There could be others, but these would lead. Tietjens wrote one eight-line poem about the things the editors received in the line of poetry. It ends:

"But oh, the little words with wings,
They are so few—so few."

(which is too true—too true).

In that list, I omitted Teasdale and Edna St. Vincent. I wonder if they will be of importance in a retrospective glance from the future. The more Frost I read, the less I admire him. He is too trivial.

When I read a great deal of American poetry, I get filled with the idea that there are many marvellous things; but one glance in that treasured Oxford Book dispels these ideas. I open it and find something like:

“The fancy cannot cheat so well as
she is famed to do, deceiving elf.”

or

“A yawn of fire.”

or

“The hare limps through the frozen grass.”

or

“We could not wail nor laugh.”

But there is no use quoting more. It will be many decades or centuries before we create things like these.

Do you know the younger Benet? He may do something great.

It is my only ambition to take some part, however small, in this change, volcanic as it will be.

But as it looks now, such will not be the case.

With Love and Love and Love, dearest friend of all,

Your devoted

BILL

C O U R A G E

N O V E M B E R, 1921

Dear ZIP:

Your letter was great. It meant more to me than any other letter I have ever received. It gives me such joy to know that I have a kind of older brother whom I love, and in whom I can confide anything. Aside from anything else, it was written superbly; it is a real essay on courage which I shall always cherish. It has helped me so much. I see now, that looking on everything philosophically, I shall be perfectly happy. It makes

me see even clearer than before, that courage is the great thing. I read Walpole's "Fortitude" this summer, and it was not till recently that I really understood its main theme: "'Tis not Life that matters; 'tis the courage you bring to it." That was a real stroke of genius, that line.

Your letter helped me to see that I am merely going through the same thing that hundreds have gone through before—*except*, I, like a fool, had hoped for and expected too much pleasure. It seems, now I look on it with a wider vision, that it was ridiculous to expect all sorts of friendships and confidences, the first year. I am much happier spending all my time with freshmen and making no particular efforts with others as I tried to at first. A week or two ago, it just flashed on me that I never paid any interest to the men of my own class, that I never had long talks with them. I am so much happier expecting a bad time and taking it naturally.

I shall never let your letter go, it has some really beautiful things in it which mean thinking, appreciation of beauty, and above all, Zip, what I love in you most, that gentleness, that generosity, and that human understanding.

The loveliest humans are those who understand and sympathize with other humans.

It was just this evening that it was suggested that some slimers get some apples. Clem had said, "Do your job willingly." Having Clem say that in a sort of over-lording, threatening tone of voice, I did not want to go; I had studies to do and a dec. to learn, but I suddenly thought of that talk we had had, and remembered what you had said: "Do your job willingly and with a smile, but don't be subservient." And so, with one other fellow, I spent an hour and got the old apples. And after all, I feel lots better now for it.

I hate the idea of being a Pollyanna about things, but I sincerely believe that with an effort of will, one can make oneself happy under any conditions.

And after the struggle, how much sweeter the repose.

Initiation is not coming until late this year, which is rather a disappointment, but so much longer the happy expectation. Keats said:

“Music that’s heard is sweet, but that unheard is sweeter.”

Sayings like those are friends in time of need—but nothing can be more comforting than your letter and: “It’s not life that matters; ‘tis courage. . . .”

I read Masfield’s poem, “Enslaved,” the other day and in the same volume, “The Hounds of Hell.” One thought, though never said in so many words, dominating both poems was: The man without fear in his heart is indomitable.

Incidentally the first one is rather poor as poetry, but “The Hounds of Hell” is a brilliant masterpiece.

But courage and bravery are absolutely different. Courage one can make. Bravery one cannot. That is the topic on which I am most ashamed of myself. I am a coward at heart, and I am sure of it, but I know that you will understand and overlook the fact. I can make myself unafraid of almost anything if I have time, but on the sudden—well, I proved it to myself when we got caught in a street brawl last fall. I don’t know what ever kept me from running. It was obvious to no one but myself, but I quaked more than I ever have before. It is interesting what the will can accomplish. When College first opened I had a mortal terror of being horsed. But by thinking I seem to have made myself rather anticipate it. I shall avoid it if I can, but somehow I shouldn’t mind much.

Too much talk about myself.

It is great that you can begin work now. Please let me know what you are doing. I really want to know how things are working out.

With every kind of affection and admiration.

Your own,

BILL

A LETTER OF THANKS

JANUARY, 1922

Dearest AUNT NENNY:

I was absolutely overwhelmed with your marvelous present, the coat, and then when the second one, the scarf came. . . .

It was perfectly lavish of you to give me such wonder-gifts. I feel like the poor beggar's son who sits on a stone drilling his knuckles into his eyes and weeping. The fairy god-mother comes in raiment dazzling and embezzling. She touches him with her wand (an umbrella) and says, "Little Clinton fellow, come to my palace, I will give you three wishes." Then she takes him by the hand and leads him to the Shipley School. "Wish, little man," she says kindly but firmly. He replies: "I wan' a coat." She gives him a huge, beautiful leather coat with double flap pockets (military style). Then he asks something to keep his neck warm, and she presents him with an exquisite silk scarf. He wants nothing more except something with which to wipe the tears from his eyes. So she leaves a lovely little handkerchief in the pocket, marked with her name. The only material thing left by the goddess for mortals to wonder at.

We have had a lovely Christmas with Grandma and

Aunt Matilda. Please give my love to Cousin Alice and keep quantities for yourself.

And don't forget it's a braw bright moonlicht night.

Thanks a thousand times again,

DUNCAN

O N R I C H E S

J A N U A R Y , 1 9 2 2

Dear GRACELINE:

Thank you both so much for the Christmas check. I have made excellent use of it already in getting a fountain pen. This is a great step for me after the one I have been using. It had a lot of rubber in it that fell into a state of decay, so that I could use it only as an ordinary pen with an inkwell on my desk for violent sophomores to upset. This one has none of that product of India in it, so I expect it to last forever.

I almost came to N. Y. this vacation to visit my friend, Mr. A. Woolcott. The Charlatans Dramatic Club here, on which I got a part, will, in all probability, be in Jamaica at Easter time. I shall depend on the Danielses.

The last time I was down was about the period of the Sunday that comes after Good Friday, when Uncle Harold helped me buy many clothes and gave me a lunch at the club. Well, it was very interesting when I went down south, to see the Deering place on which he worked. It was like a museum. How any man could live in those parlors, eat in that dining-room, and smoke in that smoking-room I cannot understand. As we were hunting vaguely around upstairs and stumbling awkwardly on things not intended for the public eye, we happened on one door that was locked. Ever since then, I have been positive that the man has an apartment

there where he lives. Doubtless he flees terrified through all the palatial grandeur below up to his room where the whole house is between four walls, and scrambles eggs on an electric toaster, and heats coffee in the bathtub. After going along many porches and Utopian (or shall we say Monte Carlo?) verandas, we got to his private harbour with designs a la Venice. He brings his private gondolas, I suppose, to the door and then goes down town to buy meat and eggs for over Sunday. But he really does get a big yacht right to his doorstep. Marvelous as the place is with art treasures just as good as those of the Metropolitan, of course not in the line of the work of any individual, but the Gothic doors, the tapestries from every country, and the floors, well, in spite of all these, I should rather be poor and then be able to want something once in a while. Imagine the agony of never having anything to work for, to hope for, to strive and fight for.

Thank you both, dears, so much.

And my love to the kiddies.

BILLY—DUNC.

TO CYNTHIA ANNE

JANUARY, 1922

Well!

How can I thank you for the great time you gave me at the Barneveld or Trentnor or Trenton Falls house party? I shall not try; you know what a marvelous time I had!

We worked all day Tuesday preparing for (as it seemed then) that abominable dance. But when it came off! I only wish you could have judged for yourself.

I know you must think I am horribly ungrateful, since I only saw you for such a fraction of a second to say

good-bye. But I had a perfectly great time every minute, and if I did not say it then I do now.

I returned to masses of work which should have been done earlier. I ought to make up back work in my spare time, but every minute I put in on Henry Adams' "Mont Saint Michel and Chartres," a fascinating book on the cathedrals.

I was so glad to meet your father. He is amazing. I like him so much.

By the way, I shall see you very soon out here.

Via has consented to attend the Junior Prom with me. I do hope she gets a good time out of it, and I see no reason why not. She had a great time last night.

By the way, we wasted one very good invitation card after all. Next time, I shall telephone as rudely as possible and draw an immediate acceptance.

Well, I must stop, and get down to work. I get such fun out of rambling madly this way for a while.

Good luck.

Love,

BILL

THE BUSY FRESHMEN

JANUARY, 1922

Dear ZIP:

Have just left a movie of Barrie's "Little Minister." It was one of the best I have ever seen. I shall write Dunham to-morrow with a view to having it put in the "Press." If all movies were as good as this, the intellectuals and Bolsheviki and readers of Whitman would stop to attend with frequency.

Woollcott sent an autograph collection for Christmas which is fine. I sent him a collection of humorous verse,

not by your "humble dust." He will use some in his "Second Thoughts," he says.

Have been hunting all day for a typewriter. I want to swap mine in, close my eyes, and then see what I draw from the great motley, melting pot, scrap bag of Utica stores. Probably shall eventually take an Underwood Portable on the installment plan, against which Mr. Fancher has warned me—experience is the only way to learn anything. If you think my selection a mad stroke of folly, *coup-de-bon* as the boys wouldn't say—telegraph immediately *collect!* Guarantee charges, I shan't fail you! I go to you for advice, of course, since you have so risen to the height of that Fhay person who twangs Coughlin's Oliver.

About Bill Baer—he is the same—more lovable every day. I used to feel him reticent, now I feel him merely temperamental. There is nothing intentional in his thoughtlessness. I think his emotions are self-centred, if you see what I mean; he wouldn't bleed (either mentally or morally, of course) for anyone but himself. And yet he is as far from selfish as anyone I know. It doesn't seem to be that at all.

Mary Lou visited us over Christmas, then the night before College opened, we gave a great party, consisting of all girls who would come and the brothers—with, I may say, the Sigs.

Last night the hockey game was won by Hamilton. Seems to be a start for the team. No Charlatan Christmas trip—but rehearsals re-started yesterday. Thanks so much for the letter—please don't typewrite again, unless that is the only means, in which case you may and must.

Yours in the Rogues Gallery,

BILL S.

JANUARY, 1922

Dear JACK:

Here is, at last, the letter which has been postponed for so long. Thanks for all the gay Christmas cards and things which were great fun as we have an Italian maid with us now, or I should say "with them," because I am now quite a stranger to the family, living in No. 2 Carnegie.

College is just about the same as ever; the class of '25 is a fine lot, laying all prejudice and the like aside. As for teaching, Bill Shep, Brownie, and Mr. Fancher are the best I have. French is hugely entertaining. We have just finished to-day Rostand's "Cyrano de Bergerac." It is a superb piece of writing. It seems to me altogether out of the class of Corneille, Racine, and the rest of the early writers of tragic drama.

I saw the Vanityfairish photograph of the well-dressed man with gloves, a cane, a Dobbs hat, and an exquisite overcoat, obviously pilfered from some second hand Greek store in the Bowery of Rome.

Cleve spent part of the Christmas holidays at our house, and we had a very entertaining time. Toto Turner was here, too, and he came over for Christmas dinner only. The night before College opened, we gave a dance in our music room until two o'clock, just about the time for the Crane's hens to begin mewling and their dogs to commence serenading. I imagine you have a "spell of the dry grins" when I talk about other peoples' dogs making a noise at night.

I have been spending much time this winter (and staying up late at night, and getting blown up for it) in writing. I am trying to learn to be able to do good serious writing, verse or otherwise, so after everyone else have gone and laid their heads on the cool, white pillow,

I sit down and begin hard work. I have been attempting verse more than anything else. Have you had a moment to spare all winter to practice at that sort of thing yourself?

I heard many pretty compliments for you the other day, so you need not think that all your old faithful supporters on College Hill have forgotten. O, no!

So you translate Dante into French and then translate that (not aloud) into English. The last step, of course, is purely mental; indeed, perhaps you do not even need the last step, in which case you will have to learn your native tongue again when you splash back up on the Hill.

Well, I must learn a few songs for the Charlatan's rehearsal which comes in about half an hour. We are doing Lady Gregory's "The Rising of the Moon."

Still hoping to see thee again,

BILL

TO WALLACE JOHNSON

Prescript (since I'm too late for a P.S.). Bill Baer sends his best regard to you and yours.

Dear WALLY:

Thank you so much for the fine time you gave me in your office the other night, or morning. I was much disappointed that you would not write "The Orchard," so that, as Mr. Patterson later said, "People think the music signifies the falling of apples." How could you go about making a song in the manner of a juicy, squashy plum falling on a hard rock? One would have to spit through the holes.

It is late, I am sitting at my desk absolutely parched and fodderless. Oh, for that oyster! Cold or hot. Nine days old.

An amusing thing happened to me this morning. I had been up late Tuesday and Wednesday nights, so in

Bonham's history class I fell sound asleep, with which he proceeded to snatch a heavy notebook from some fellows in his close proximity and throw it at me. He happened to hit me in the stomach.

Sometime I shall seek revenge.

The more I think of that music, the greater an experience it seems to be. After all, the essential quality which made it amazing was the simultaneousness of their playing, those fast passages where they alternated having the air. So the score would look like this:



fast, you know, just as quickly as they could follow one hand after the other. Their playing was not particularly good taken individually. Neither would be a good concert soloist.

But they say they had been studying this stuff ever since school days in Germany. I only wish I had been able to get down to Schelling's arrangement of the 13 pianos in Carnegie Hall. Imagine them all at once.

Thank you again so much,

Very cordially,

BILL

*THE following trial flights in prose writing
were found in his desk.*

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL EXPERIENCE

Although it happened a year ago, I can see the whole thing before me now as though it were last night.

The crowd of students, shouting and singing, marched up the street. They had paraded about the village and had called for a speech at each professor's house, and were now coming back for celebrations on the campus. They were on the road, and I watched them from the sidewalk.

An automobile came up in the front. They all shouted and whooped and drew aside to let it pass. Then, like a shying horse, the automobile jerked into a terrific speed and plunged into the crowd: It banged on the rough road as it went through. My heart was in my mouth. The car, with a hard, merciless bump, turned off the road. At first I thought it had hit a rock and was going for the ditch; but no, it stopped.

I cannot remember what was said as we crowded forward; but I can remember my horror at the limp body lying in the dust.

The man who had been driving the car was in a panic. "Quick, you fellows, where's a doctor?" he gasped, hurriedly.

Two students got into the car with him and four others raised up the body. Some mumbled that his leg was broken, others made different suggestions, but everyone underneath this curiosity, was sick at heart.

The rest of us marched on up the hill. There was no more joy as there had been before. We did not stop at the professors' houses for speeches. Most of the words spoken were curses on the automobile driver.

They told me later that everybody went to the gymnasium, and saw blindfold boxing and wrestling, and ate and drank. When I returned home I could not work or eat; neither could I sleep.

W. D. SAUNDERS

MY ROOM

If you were to push open the door of No. 2 Carnegie, the first thing you would think would be: "This *is* a messy room."

The chief inspiration of this remark would be the long table in the center of the room, on which you would see overcoats, tennis rackets, laundry bags, hats, and other articles.

The desks would next attract your attention. The one farthest to the right would strike you as looking rather neat. The typewriter table behind it would seem less well kept, for there are papers lying uncomfortably upon it.

The next desk cries out in its agony to be cleared off. You could hardly see the wood, so thick are the papers, notebooks, blotters, and geological specimens on it. In the middle of the desk you would notice a buff and blue cap inscribed "Was Los." Perhaps this is the reason why the desk is messy.

The third is a table pushed up to the wall. On it stand two piles of many-colored books, lying on their sides, their titles facing you. The books are not evenly and neatly arranged; they stick out, some forward, some to the sides. There are many notebooks, pads, and magazines in the piles, which make them look worse. On the table there are inkstands, a nail file, a magnifying glass, and a pencil-holder. The pencils are scattered around the table.

You would notice no more details. You might see that there are no pennants on the walls, only two big, rectangular Hamilton banners, which prevent an appearance of bareness.

Although you would not think the room looked inviting, as soon as you opened the door, you would receive a real welcome; you would come in and sit down in the great uncomfortable armchair and stay for a delightful hour.

W. D. SAUNDERS

CHRISTMAS EVE

Flakes of snow were drifting through the darkness gently to earth. The air nipped my hands as I stood gazing out from the porch. Inside the house a piano and violin were playing softly; the sound seemed to sift through the walls and throb gently in my ears. A light from a farmhouse made the flakes glitter and dazzle like thousands of jewels. I could hear faintly the sound of their touching as they fell on the snow. The music still sounded very quietly; a hush enwrapped everything. Suddenly I felt a sense of the beauty around me; a thrill made my nerves tingle with the joy of life. The stillness added enchantment. Songs I had long forgotten rang in my ears. There was no motion in the air, no breath of wind, nor any rustle in the pines. The music trembled on, and presently stopped. Nature, having garbed herself exquisitely, lay still. Then midnight struck slowly. I opened the door quietly and went back into the house; I had seen Christmas Day come in.

January, 1921

FRAGMENT

You say you don't believe in Hell.

See this picture of the French Cathedral, the tapering spires, the three huge Gothic doors, the thousand images of Saints (each inch a carefully carved masterpiece), the buttresses leaping downward.

See this picture of the inside. Look at the interminable height, the vaulting, and then—the Rose Window far above the altar where the coloured light comes through. . . .

Remember the one at Rheims? Just like the pictures. And the man who destroyed it, his soul will be blessed? Eh?

OCTOBER NIGHT

There have been many beautiful nights, recently, now that October is here. The days preceding them have been fresh and frosty in the mornings and windy in the afternoons, and with everything the delicious smell of apples, grapes, and goldenrod. But oh! the nights! I love the crisp air lighted by the moon's glow as she shines out from among the millions of stars dotting the sky. It is on these nights that I put on a warm coat and go out into the darkness, leaving behind all wordly anxieties, and lie down on the cold, wet, affectionate Earth and look up into the firmament.

For a few moments my mind is occupied with the thoughts of the day just finished and the day to come next, but soon, as though swimming into a soft sleep, I begin to feel the immensity of the distance from the Earth to those stars out there. Then my mind abandons its first sensation that I am lying on a firm Earth looking up into a dome punctured with stars, and I begin to feel that I am on a floating body, and that the sky is not the roof of this Earth, but that the Earth is a part of the sky, that the World is in the middle of a vast nothingness and that there are as many stars below me as above me. And I begin to think that I am myself floating, and in my head there rings a song I know:

“There are houses hanging above the stars,
And stars hung under a sea. . . .”

And instead of looking upward, I am looking out at the Universe, and how small I am, lying here on the ground, and how small are my eyes, and yet what millions of miles do they penetrate! And the distance from me to those stars is measured!

How keen and miraculous is Man to open these figures to his knowledge, to know where there is fire and where

there is mere mass of rock, to know of what matter some body ten thousand times the distance from the Earth to the Sun is made! Is he not magnificent to know these great secrets? At these moments I am sometimes afraid, afraid of something, I know not what. Perhaps, it is the realization of the great strength there must be to keep the whole Creation moving and burning and growing. At these moments Man's knowledge seems minute. His life seems a mere swing of the pendulum. The whole length of the Earth's history seems nothing. How futile the struggle between Man and his world! Why should he want to live; his life can be of no importance. It can give pleasure to his friends; it can serve his community; it can help his country; it can be of service to his world. . . . But what is that? Does that affect the planets—the stars? They are solitary, cold, dead things out there laughing at us all, because we cannot even understand the distance to the nearest of them.

Laughing! Laughing! Laughing! They know what a ridiculous thing it is for Man to try to help that Power which guides, not only us, but the millions—the billions—of grains of dust in the sky, which are each greater than our Sun! I feel alone. I feel that our Humanity is a mere handful of struggling creatures here on this pathetic Earth of ours, this Rock with so many cities.

And is it possible that the Force which keeps that great space full of moving gases, rocks, and fires can stop to exalt a man on this Earth? Ah, the Empires of Alexander! Was it the man's own personality or the Divine Power which gave Alexander his dominions? Who gave Khubla Khan the Orient? Who gave Michelangelo and Shakespeare their geniuses? And Napoleon—was there something divine behind his meteoric career?

You and I cannot dream of equalling these men—and yet they are no more than mere passing fancies on a

solitary island. Why should we strive? I feel a longing to give up the struggle. It terrifies me to think that there is a strength outside our reason that could dash our Earth to nothing in a twinkling. I realize that we are so solitary, so useless, futile, insane—the whole World! The Earth is a hill and we are scurrying ants. . . .

Ants! Flies, beetles, bees, by the millions on Earth. As many insects on Earth as stars in the sky! So there is another Universe. Why are they here? What can they be for? And each one of them such a beautiful, delicate, intricate machine!

Running busily about their hill, the ants do not stop to think that a man's foot could crush their work of years. How stupid they are not to see that their strength is so little, that their world is so minute.

Some day—will a great Being put his foot down on the Earth? Shall we all, like the ants, scurry in every direction, but be trampled down? So, all our great deeds, wars, revolutions, edifices, creations, inventions—everything that seems so miraculous to us now—all are chaff blown to the winds of time?

There is no such thing as substance; everything is a mere combination of infinitesimal charges of electricity. God! Is it thinkable? One atom loses an electron and another draws the electron into its own system. Is it conceivable that there are movements such as these in an atom which is much too small even to be seen in our most powerful microscopes? Another terrifying Universe.

Atoms—stars—we. . . .

What am I here for?

Suppose I did something on Earth greater than has ever been done before—would that be noticed by the great Power? Nothing that I could do would affect the swarms of flies, ants, and beetles. How could it reach the stars?

Wretched, conceited, crazy creatures that we are! Life! Life! That is the thing to which we cling—hold tight by our teeth and our fingernails!

And what is it all for?

It is only a minute that Man—that Humanity from beginning to end—exists. All efforts are vain. Why not throw away one's life? Why not let the current wash us all down? There is no use trying to swim upstream. No use in any struggle, any hope.

But stop.

The terrifying realization: Is it possible that the Earth is the only body in the whole Universe where there is such a thing as life? Can it be that Man is the only intelligent creature in the whole system? Why not? The power might have made everything else for Man to wonder at—to pique his curiosity.

Then how few of us there are to appreciate the gift. Then men, for whom all these stars and little insects were made, are numerable! There are so few beings on this Earth to know the great secrets!

Therefore every man has a part to play, not for the World alone but for all outside. Every man must serve that great Being which has made the whole Creation. He has a Power whom he worships, and he has an Ideal to live up to. Then I will live and work and struggle against the tide, ever unyielding, ever unflinching.

I lie on the cold wet leaves thinking these thoughts. There is a question which I ponder over as I return to the house: "Is the World a futile and infinitesimal part of the whole, or is the Earth the place for which it was all made, and Man the blessed one to perceive it all?" I know no more now than I did at first, but now my former worries seem petty.

What a gorgeous night it is! How strong and overwhelming! See those many-shaped clouds, here dark,

here light, passing across the Moon. This sky is secret,
quiet as it voices God.

What a pathetically ignorant creature Man is!

August, 1921

THE verses that follow had been copied into his note book, evidence that he was finished with them.

BURIAL OF PHILIP IV OF SPAIN

Four score torches burning bright
For the king's dead body wet light gave;
Four score torches flaming the night,
One last tribute before the grave.

Rumbling on cobblestones the great march starts
Through the city gates, slow but bright,
That march of death moves on through the night
Before the body is lost from our sight.
Far up a steeple where the bell-ropes are,
An old man, watching it, quietly prays;
All night long he stands in the winds
To see the torches, far away, so far. . . .
Of all Madrid that should mourn the sight
Only this man through the cold of the night
Watches for miles up on the hill
Where the lights flicker now, seem to be gone—
No, there again, they are burning still,
Watched by the one old man alone. . . .
Ah, faithless city! So no one stays
Awake through the night? So no one prays
That God may bless the dead king's soul?
The old man watches over the city.
“Damned ones!” he mutters, and looks again
Up to the hilltops where yet the lights burn.
Old man alone, blown on God's tower,
Prays for the lost king hour by hour. . . .
Away up there where the winds take flight,
Far above the bell-ropes, tolls midnight. . . .

Four score torches burning bright
For the king's dead body wet light gave;
Four score torches flaming the night,
One last tribute before the grave.

May, 1921

TIME

Days pass and pass; they're like parades,
One after one, ever going.

The Earth spins, always the same;
We watch, the reason never knowing.

So when I hear the clock tick on,
I think of Chronos, walking, walking. . . .

And then the midnight—you'll not go?
Can Time not stop you talking, talking?

October, 1921

WRAITHS

Through still, black silence
Falls a beam of light,
So brilliant that my hand therein
Does shine a leprous white.

And from the cigarette I hold
A thread of smoke entwines
Itself about in turning spheres,
Streaming upward, thin gray lines.

Twisting into volumes strange,
More ethereal than thought,
Threads with a mysterious breath
The painter never, never caught.

Nothing we see could be more fair
In labyrinthine mystery.
Does not music rise like this
Into Eternity?

The ashes fall and blow away;
Our bodies turning back to dust.
The smoke is melted into air;
The stars alone our souls can trust.

November, 1921

THE DARK HOUSE

Over the snow the carols came,
Throbbing on the frosted air;
Snowflakes drifted down like stars;
All was joy, no thought of prayer.

Windows of one house were dark,
Wreaths hung not upon the door,
Yule logs burned not in the hearth,
He had gone for evermore.

You were full of Christmas joy,
Sparkling was your soul, as wine,
Brilliant were your happy eyes. . . .
But, alas, not so were mine.

Windows of my house were dark,
Colours were not in the air,
In that home no songs could sound;
Death had put his finger there.

December, 1921

MUSIC

My soul is but a violin,
Your eyes, they are the bow;
You draw from me a mellow tone,
And yet you do not know.

Oh, you could make the pale moon weep,
And make the planets hear,
If you but knew you held the bow,
The stars would drop a tear.

January, 1922

THE MOTH

The moth yearns for the candle,
The candle but kindles the torch,
The torch is obscured by the sun,
On the sun, the moth's wings would scorch.

So do I come to thine altar;
Kneeling, for thee do I yearn;
But if I went even near thee,
My humble wings I should burn.

January, 1922

MUSIC

When the music was over, I spoke to you,
And your voice was like clear water
Rippling over mosses green;
Your eyes shone like deep gems,
And in them I saw a kind of fire
Like none I had ever seen;
Something, I think, was caught in your soul,
You wanted to hide it, but I saw.
Music had never struck you just that way before
When we went out into the street again,
The fresh rain was pouring down
And drenching the street-lamps near the door.
On we walked yet neither spoke a word.
But there was a tenseness in your gait,
You had something to say. I could see!
(Through agony your soul had passed
While the music was playing).
And then you stopped and looked at me;
"I've sometimes felt," you began, "that if I knew. . ."
You stopped; I ached to know the rest,
But in your eyes there came a frightened look.
You dared not say the words I longed to hear.
You were yourself once more, all music gone,
And strange to me as some unopened book.

January, 1922

NIGHT SONG

O Moon,
You breathe your music on my heart,
My soul is filled with melody,
A breeze is in the tree above,
Cherry blossoms cover me.

O Moon,
I beg you thrill my comrade's heart,
Reach him with some rhythm slim,
Sing him the song you sang to me,
With the same blossoms cover him.

January, 1922

*THE next six poems were rough draughts
found in his desk.*

[TITLE UNDECIDED]

Painted harlot of the night,
Through all your false smiles,
Your lures, your filthy lusts,
Through all your foul means
Of gaining by men's passion—
Somewhere beneath, there is a spark
Where Beauty dwells.

Oh, fair youth, shining of limb,
Glowing in the glory of life,
Behind your truth, your pure love,
Your strong war-spirit,
Behind your beautiful face—
Hidden, but still I see—
There is a germ of something else.

THE PARTING

We came to a meadow where breezes blew;
It was time to part,
He knew and I knew.

We felt as two close mountain peaks
When a valley grows between
Wider, wider . . . neither speaks.

Ah, my heart felt its very sinews break
To know that friend was leaving me.
Deep down within my soul there burned an ache.

The valley seemed to stretch, but ne'er a sound
From his lips or from mine.
Oh, God, canst thou ever heal this wound?

He held his hand for mine to press;
Our hearts were one,
Each other's thoughts we needed not to guess.

My palm in his, there was a long, long grip;
Two roots had grown together,
Now their souls' blood had to drip.

I saw that tears were in his eyes.
In anguish cried my heart;
"Is this a day to make me wise?"

I could not speak, my soul was lead;
He muttered, "God, it hurts!"
His hand dropped mine . . . my heart was dead.

The valley gaped between—he walked away;
I could not weep. So great my grief
No words, no thoughts could say.

I knew that I should see him never;
I felt the years to come—and death,
I living on alone, forever . . .

NIGHT

Sunset is the end of day,
A torch, a homage for the dead.
Some say that Night is terrible
A blackness filled with things of dread.

Reptiles wriggling on the ground
And loathsome bats are in the air,
Pixies with their evil thoughts
And rats are running on the stair.

No, no! To me the Night's a friend,
The darkness is a balm for pain,
Cold, green moonlight soothes my heart. . . .
The world is washed by pouring rain.

Sunset is a beacon fire;
It blazes; and its message shows;
Then God speaks to those who hear:
The snow drifts while the great wind blows.

[TITLE UNDECIDED]

Though thunder-clouds drum battles on,
And rains wash down from the sky,
And lightnings crash for an instant's flash,
Let the rains blow by!

Let the rains blow by and the stars come out,
And I'll build a fire of leaves;
Though hard the wind blows, yet my fire, it glows,
And its smoke this message weaves:

This flame, here, burns the leaves that are dead,
Though once they have been green;
I burn them bright in the starry night,
And the planets my blaze have seen.

I am brilliant to you, but a dot to them,
As I shine on this whirling globe;
But faint though I be, the nebulae see
The secret you cannot probe.

Those suns far out and the flames they give
Are reading my message true;
And the fires out there that are burning the air
Know that I blaze for you.

These leaves I burn were once on trees,
Shining for Beauty's sake;
But their life is fled, they are withered and dead
But a song for you they make.

They roared with glee as the winds went by,
And they sang as the breezes blew;
I thought they were made for godly shade,
But now I see they're for you!

Can the stars not tell you my soul calls out?
Can the moon not whisper true?
And can it be so you will never know
That these dead were burning for you?

[TITLE UNDECIDED]

When night came down from the zenith
And stars peeped out through the dome,
The sea was cold, green, icy,
Each wave had a cap of foam;
The clouds unfurled in the still, black air
And on they came with the West Wind's blare!
And wolves came up and fiendishly howled.
Their jaws dripped fire, in the wind they prowled.

Then snow swept the field with a whistling
And mounted in fanciful drifts,
The wind was a knife in its blowing
And in the billows cut rifts;
But I alone among snowflakes stood
And the wind tore over my cape and my hood;
A gull was swept by the wind as it blew;
Someone appeared, it was you, it was you!

From your eyes all sparkle of hope gone,—
Your blood was thickened with cold,
You needed my strength to support you,
My courage your soul to uphold.
The storm had killed the garden I had:
One bloom in my soul kept my spirit glad,
One bloom of Hibiscus in scarlet shone bright,
That flower was Love, my courage, my light.

No wine could I give you, no nectar,
No words that would give you new heart,
No clothing to keep the cold out,
No song renewed courage could start,
No message of cheer, no wish for good luck,—
But instead, the bloom in my soul did I pluck,—
It was fortitude for the sorrows of night,
'Twas fire of courage, 'twas strength for the fight!

THE ARTIST

My soul is in anguish
As if cut by a knife
When the people lose faith
Is there hope or life!
When the game has been lost
And the plea unheard
And the tear not dried—
Just one more word:
When they hurt me to-night
And death seemed sweet
I went into darkness
The rain and the sleet.
I spoke with my soul
It answered; I heard:
“You might have been saved
By merely a word.”
I spoke with the dead
Thus answered a wraith,
“You might not die
If the people had faith.”
I drank a sweet opiate
Then I saw light
Death was come to me
That very night.
When I’ve gone from the earth
They will only say
“A drunk, an idiot,
A poor fool at play.”
But the dawn will come
And then, they will say,
“We should have stood by him
That torturous day.”
Too late, though, you mocked
When you had sworn love

And I shall judge you
When you come above.
Loose, Earth, your fires!
Tear towers down!
I am their God!
And they thought me a clown!

THIS final poem was the one on which he was at work the night before he died. The manuscript was still in his typewriter when they straightened out his desk next day.

SLEEP

Good night, and farewell,
I depart on a breakerless sea;
I shall float and be rocked among stars,
Good night, sweet your dreams be!

Farewell, I shall ride,
I shall ride on the billows and sing,
I shall forget the cool, brown earth,
And sail like a gull on the wing.

Goodbye! I shall meet you again
After my journey is done,
When my bark drifts back to the shore,
And the stars that guide it are gone.

O that my boat might be shipwrecked,
Out in that sea of my sleep!
O that I might sink forever—
Sink in the starless deep!

January, 1922

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